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INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF

Mr. THOMAS PRENTICE

TO THE

PASTORAL OFFICE

WITH THE

Rev. Mr. EDWARD GODWIN,

At Little St. Helen's, Bishopsgate-Street,

February 1, 1764

By THOMAS TOWLE.

Together with

Mr. PRENTICE'S Confession of FAITH.

AND AN

EXHORTATION

TO HIM,

By WILLIAM LANGFORD, D. D.

Published by Request.

L O N D O N,

Printed for J. JOHNSON, opposite the Monument.

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At Little St. Helen's, Bedford Square,

February 1, 1864

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EXHORTATION

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WILLIAM LINDSAY, D.D.

London: Printed by J. Johnson, opposite the Monument.

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T H E

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

I Will give you pastors, according to mine heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding^a.---These are the words of God himself, Go and proclaim (says God to the prophet^b) these words towards the North, and say, return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, &c.---They were indeed originally addressed to the Jews, but they had a reference to the gospel dispensation: so the words immediately after them^c lead us to conclude. And it shall come to pass when ye be multiplied, and increased in the land; in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, the ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind, neither shall they remember it, neither shall they visit it, neither shall that be done, (or as in the margin) neither shall it be magnified any more, i. e. God shall be worship'd without the ark, that much valued

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^a Jer. iii. 15.^b Verse 12.^c Verse 16.

utenfil in the tabernacle and temple.---And they contain *a very comprehensive and important promise*. 'Twould take up too much of the time allotted to me in the solemnity of this day, and infringe on the provinces of my brethren who are to succeed me, was I to attempt even a *brief and general* explication of this assurance: all therefore that I shall suggest at present concerning it is, that it *supposes* one thing, and *declares* another.---It *supposes* the erection of gospel churches: and indeed to *those sacred societies* our thoughts are directed in the words immediately preceding the passage we are attending to^d: *Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.*---But does the assurance before us suppose the erection of gospel churches. It *declares* that God would furnish those churches with *pastors*, i. e. *bishops* or *elders*, (for *these* are characters of the same office in the New Testament) who should not spend their lives in useless state, or pernicious indolence, but by a faithful dispensation of his word and ordinances, (under his influence) lead those among whom they labour, into, not a *merely speculative*, but also *an experimental and practical* acquaintance with the things of religion; whom he would approve of, yea, honour

^d Verse 14.

honour with the tokens of that approbation both here and hereafter. — This assurance has been punctually and frequently accomplished. It was made good at the commencement of the gospel dispensation; for no sooner had the divine Mediator taken his seat in the world of glory, than (to use the apostle *Paul's* language^e) he not only gave apostles, prophets, and evangelists, but also pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, &c. And was it fulfilled then? it has been made good (such has been the faithfulness of God to his promise!) ever since that remarkable æra to this very day. Have not you, my friends of this church been witnesses of its accomplishment? Surely, (not to mention your other pastors, *Annesley* *, *Woodhouse* †, and *Robinson* ‡, men deservedly eminent in their day!) your present venerable Pastor, *the Rev. Mr. Edward Godwin* **, is an undeniable evidence thereof.--

^e Ephes. iv. 11, 12.

* *Dr. Samuel Annesley* (the first pastor after liberty of conscience was granted) had the living of *Cripplegate*, and lectureship of *Paul's*, was ejected for nonconformity in 1662, and died *December 31, 1696*, aged 77.

† *Mr. John Woodhouse* succeeded *Dr. Annesley*. He was (says *Dr. Calamy*) silenced in the county of *Nottingham*, was afterwards chaplain to the lady *Grantham*, was useful in breeding up many young men for the ministry, and died in the year 1700.

‡ *Mr. Benjamin Robinson* succeeded *Mr. Woodhouse*, and died *April 30, 1724*.

** *Mr. Edward Godwin* was chosen co-pastor with *Mr. Robinson* in 1722.

thereof.--Yea, may it not be said, *this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears?*--I hope it may; for I trust God is (in the person of my brother, now separating to the pastoral office, in conjunction with that servant of Christ, whom age and infirmities have laid aside from his honourable and important work) giving you a pastor according to his heart; who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.--Now, that it may appear to all present, that proper methods have been taken previous to the work of this day, I would take the liberty of introducing its sacred services with a few requests.

Without doubt, there are some things proper to be attended to by a church of Christ, in order to the settlement of a pastor among them, (when one under this character is needed by them) accordingly I must first of all desire, that one of this church, in the name of the whole, will give an account of the steps which have been taken by this Christian society, with a view to its obtaining that important blessing.

Which was immediately done by a brother of the church, before appointed for that purpose. As you the members of this church of Christ, have given an invitation to the Rev. Mr. Thomas Prentice to take the oversight of you in the Lord, together with the Rev. Mr. Edward Godwin, my further request

request is, that you will publicly renew the said invitation.

Which was also done directly by holding up of hands.

Since it becomes a faithful minister of Christ, when he receives an invitation to the pastoral office in a church of Christ, to take such methods as are suited to (with the divine blessing) to bring him to a proper determination about it:-- one thing I must request of you, my friend, and brother, now separating to pastoral work, is, that you will lay before this assembly, the steps you have taken relative to the call to that work, which has been given you by this church.

This was immediately complied with by Mr. Prentice.

As this church has publicly renewed its invitation to you, Sir, to become its pastor, in conjunction with the Rev. Mr. Godwin, my further request to you is, that you will as publicly renew your acceptance of its invitation.

This Mr. Prentice did accordingly.

As a Pastor's feeding his people with knowledge and understanding, undoubtedly supposes, that one who sustains this weighty character, knows and believes the several articles of religious truth which he is to dispense among his people, it has been usual,

usual, on these days, for the person ordained, to make what is commonly called *a confession of his faith*:--I must, therefore, (and it is the *last* request I shall make) desire that you, Sir, will be pleased to comply with this laudable custom, by making on this solemn occasion, *a public confession of your faith*.

Here Mr. Prentice delivered the confession of his faith, which follows this introduction.

The several requests, which it was thought proper to mention, having been made, and complied with,--nothing more remains for me to do at this time than to commend *the aged pastor of this church, you, my friend, now entering on pastoral work in it, and the church itself to the care and blessing of heaven*.---And be assured I do *this* with sincerity and pleasure; earnestly praying, that all needful assistance may be granted in further carrying on the sacred services of this day;---that those services may be followed with the smiles both of providence and grace, and that all present may meet in that triumphant assembly, whose delightful employment it will be to ascribe *blessing, honour, glory and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb for ever and ever* *.

• Rev. v. 13.

THE

T H E

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

PERSUADED that the scriptures nowhere discountenance this request, I readily comply with it.

But being conscious that the eye of God, who seeth not as man seeth, inspects my whole deportment, I dare not attempt disguise, but must be obliged to give you the unfeigned sentiments of my mind, without respect either to the censure or applause of men.

The limits of the present period will not suffer me to lay before you the reasons of my faith: nor indeed can any thing more be thought needful, in an exercise of this nature, than a free declaration of what I apprehend to be supported by the authority of God's revelation.

I. I believe that all nature, in silent, yet pathetic language, proclaims a first and superintending

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perintending cause, a being of infinite perfections, whom we call God ^a.

II. I believe that the scriptures of the old and new testament were given by inspiration of God, and contain a complete revelation of his will; and that they, separate from all traditions, councils, synods, decrees, or private conceptions of men whatsoever, are of themselves a sufficient and unerring rule of faith and manners ^b.

III. Upon the authority of that sacred book, I believe that *there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost*. That these three are both distinguished and united; distinguished by personal characters and operations; but united or one in nature or essence ^c.

IV. I believe that every event takes place according to the foreknowledge and eternal purpose of God, *who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will* ^d.

V. In conformity thereto, I believe that God created the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein ^e.

VI. I believe that man was formed with unfulfilled perfection of nature and happiness; but lost it by his disobedience to the divine command, and thereby became obnoxious

^a Rom. i. 19, 20. ^b 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17.
^c 1 John v. 7. Acts xxviii. 19. Gal. iii. 20. ^d Eph.
i. 11. ^e Gen. i. 1. Col. i. 16. Rev. iv. xi.

noxious to the wrath and curse of God in this and the future world ^f.

VII. I believe that all mankind (feminally and federally existing in *Adam*), became depraved and guilty, in consequence of the first transgression ^g.

VIII. I believe that the whole world of men, being thus fallen from God, and become guilty before him, are no longer the fit objects of his complacency; but are alike unworthy of his favor, and might therefore have been left universally to perish in their rebellion ^h. But

IX. I believe that God out of his mere good pleasure, before the foundation of the world, hath chosen or predestinated a seed to serve him out of the degenerate race, who are in scripture called the *elect* ⁱ.

X. I believe that in the fulness of time, as the result of the eternal purpose, "*the word was made flesh and dwelt among us*" as the Messiah; and that the divine and human natures were so intimately connected as to form but one person ^k.

XI. I believe that this illustrious person was made under the very same law which his people had transgressed; that he fulfilled it and made it honorable, and at

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length

^f Gen. i. 27. Eccl. vii. 29. Ps. xlix. 12. ^g Ps. li. 5.
^h Rom. iii. 9, 10, 11, 12, 19, 23. Exod. xxxiv. 7. Ps. v. 5. ⁱ Rom. viii. 29, 30—xi. 7. Eph. i. 4. 2 Tim. i. 9. Rom. ix. 18.
^k Gal. iv. 4. 1 Pet. i. 20. John i. 14. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

length laid down his life as their substitute, surety or representative ¹.

XII. I believe the resurrection of *Jesus* from the dead, as that grand event which collected all the preceding evidence of his Messiahship: that he ascended up into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, making intercession for all that the Father hath given him ^m.

XIII. In consequence of the appearance of the son of God in our world, I believe that the gospel or the glad tidings of a perfectly free salvation through him, is to be preached to every creature, without distinction of rank or character ⁿ.

XIV. I believe that there is no other ground for the sinners hope of acceptance with God, and that nothing more is requisite, than what is freely exhibited in the divine declaration of the efficacy of Christ's blood to cleanse from every sin, and that every other ground of hope, in whatever it may be, is consequently delusive and vain ^o.

XV. I believe that all the force of human reasoning, and all the persuasive charms of eloquence, joined with all the efforts

¹ Gal. iv. 4. 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. iii. 13. ^m Acts ii. 24. 1 Cor. xv. 17. Heb. i. 3.—vii. 25. ⁿ Mark xvi. 15, 16. Luke xxiv. 47. Acts xiii. 38.—x. 43. Acts xvi. 31. ^o 1 John i. 7. Isa. lv. 1, & 2. Rev. xxii. 17. 1 Pet. ii. 6. Rom. x. 11. Acts iv. 12. 1 Cor. iii. 11.

efforts of which the mind of man is capable, can never remove the ignorance and prejudices, or effect the conversion of one sinner, or make the call or declaration of the gospel effectual to the soul^p.

XVI. I believe therefore the absolute necessity of a supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, to chase away the native darkness or ignorance of the mind, *by shining into the heart, and giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ, thereby casting down imaginations (or false reasonings) and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ^q.*

XVII. I am persuaded that all who believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of *Moses*, being accepted as righteous, not for any thing found in or performed by them, but solely upon the account of that which is believed in, namely the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ^r.

By faith I mean not a *dead* or *cold* assent to scripture truth, such as may be and is the effect of a religious education and other causes; but such a persuasion as results from a conviction of the truth in its divine import

^p 1 Cor. ii. 14. John vi. 44. Zech. iv. 6. ^q John
xvi. 8. John iii. 5. 2 Cor. iv. 6.—x. 5. ^r Acts
xiii. 39. Rom. iv. 5.—v. 19. Tit. iii. 5.

port and moment, and is the effect of a supernatural agency.---Or in other words, such a persuasion of the certainty, sufficiency and importance of the work of righteousness, which was finished by the son of God on *Calvary's* mount, as is attended with the love of it, and the dependence of the mind absolutely and entirely upon it^s.

XVIII. I believe that all whom God justifieth he also sanctifieth; that *their souls*, (consequently their lives) *are purified in obeying the truth through the spirit*^t.

XIX. Although I believe that every one, be his profession what it may, who seeketh ease or relief to his guilty and troubled conscience, or expects his acceptance with God, from the consideration of any past or present emotions or dispositions which he may have felt or now feels in his mind; or from any thing else separate from the free discovery of God's grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, so far mistakes and opposes the very design of the gospel^u.---Nevertheless are the christian's experiences of the power and efficacy of the gospel, to be thankfully acknowledged to the honor of the Holy Ghost: and the whole of his conformity to the will of Christ to be regarded

^s James ii. 26. Heb. xi. 1. Rom. x. 10. Gal. v. 6.
^t 1 Pet. i. 22. Ephes. ii. 10. Col. iii. 10. Tit. iii. 5.
^u Isa. l. 11. Rom. vii. 24, 25. 2 Cor. xii. 9.

garded as the evidence of his faith, or that he hath not believed in vain, but to the salvation of his soul ^w.

XX. I believe the final perseverance of the saints, *who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation* ^x.

XXI. I am persuaded that all believers are obliged by the authority of their Lord, to make an open profession of his name in a church-relation ^y.

XXII. A christian church, I believe, is a society of persons drawn together by the power of the Lord in the ministry of the word, and united together in their profession of the same hope toward God, and of their affection one for another.---That they are, as such, subject to no other authority than that of their illustrious head, the Lord Jesus ; but are bound to observe whatsoever he hath enjoined upon his disciples, though it should be at the risque of their interest in the world, or even of life itself ^z.

XXIII. I believe that every church of Christ has a right within itself of choosing its own pastors or elders and deacons, and

^w 1 Tim. i. 13, 14. Eph. i. 3. 1 Pet. i. 3. 2 Cor. i. 3. 1 Pet. ii. 9. 2 Cor. ii. 14. Acts x. 34, 35. James ii. 18. 1 John ii. 3. ^x 1 Pet. i. 5. John xiv. 19. ^y Rom. x. 9, 10. John xiv. 15. ^z 1 Cor. i. 2. Luke xii. 9.

and of admitting and excommunicating as the scripture directs^a.

XXIV. Baptism and the Lord's supper, I believe, are of divine institution, and to be continued to the end of the world.

Baptism I apprehend to be significant of the efficacy of the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon the conscience; or of the purifying operations of the Holy Ghost; and to be administered to all professing the faith and hope of the gospel, and to the seed of such.

The Lord's supper, I apprehend, is designed for the commemoration of the sufferings and death of Christ, as the support of all our hope before God; and for the profession of our union and fellowship one with another, as members of the same body.

XXV. I believe the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the day of judgment by Jesus Christ, wherein the righteous will be admitted to mansions of blessedness; and they *that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will be punished with an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power^b.*

Thus

^a Acts i. 22, 23. Acts vi. 33. Rom. xiv. 1. 1 Cor. v. 4. 2 Thess. iii. 6. ^b 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.

Thus I have given you a plain and honest representation of the most leading articles, which I apprehend the scriptures teach me to believe, either by express declarations or necessary consequences; and which I shall therefore endeavour to inculcate upon you, my brethren of this church, in my future labors among you. And you may assure yourselves that (as God may help me) I shall attend with diligence and prayer to those lively oracles of truth: and conscientiously lay before you whatever doctrine or precept I apprehend to be revealed in them.—And to this end, I entreat your unwearied supplications at the throne of grace, that the spirit of God may guide me into all truth; may teach me to know his will and obey it with integrity of heart; *and that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified among you.*

The C H A R G E.

DEAR BROTHER,

AS we condole this church, on account of the weak and low state to which it hath pleased God to reduce the aged and worthy minister, who has many years watched over it in the Lord; so it gives a sensible consolation to see you this day unanimously called, and readily consenting to undertake the pastoral care thereof, with him, as a son with a father, if he shall be restored to publick service, or alone, by God's help, if that desirable blessing should not be granted to this Christian society.

At your request, it is my province to offer some advices and exhortations to you, with regard to your great and arduous work. I desire to speak every word to myself, as well as to you; and, therefore, shall speak with great freedom and plainness.

(1.) I beg of you, my dear brother, to think of the close connexion there is between personal religion, and ministerial fidelity and usefulness. Take heed to your-
self,

self, the state of your own soul, and the prevailing bias of your mind, and course of your life: every good man is not fit to be a minister; but every good minister must certainly be a good man; for who can watch as he ought, for the souls of others, if he neglects and despises his own soul? who that does not love Christ in sincerity, can feed his sheep, and his lambs, with faithfulness, diligence, and tender affection? who that has not seen his glory, and tasted his grace, can represent these objects with propriety and life to those that hear him? how can he who knows not by experience the new birth, the privileges and pleasures, the hopes and fears, the changes and conflicts, of the Christian state, describe these things feelingly, and in a right way to others? and how can he pray with enlargement of heart, who has not the spirit of adoption in him? and if a bad man be an acceptable and useful minister to his fellow creatures, yet when he has preached to them, he must be be himself a castaway; necessary it is therefore that a gospel minister should be a real Christian; and he must be an improving Christian too, in order to the affectionate and experimental performance of his duty: his fitness for, and success in his work. will most probably be in proportion to the growth or decay of religion in his own heart and practice.

(2.) I would exhort you to maintain, through grace, as clear an evidence as may be of your call to the ministry. We are not to expect in our days, such an immediate and extraordinary call and mission from God as the apostles had; but the ordinary call which continues to this time is from above; God chooses some and singles them out from others to serve him in the ministerial office, by special acts of providence and grace; by natural gifts and endowments; by the approbation of other ministers, upon trial of their knowledge and spirits; and by the consent of Christian people, to put themselves under their pastoral care.

Where these things concur, I apprehend one has good reason to believe he is called of God to feed his church; and it must be a great advantage to a minister to have a full satisfaction in this point, because it will strengthen his faith in prayer for the divine blessing, and secure the peace of his own mind under disappointments, if conscience bear witness that he has sincerely prayed and endeavoured to fulfil the ministry which he has received in the Lord.

(3.) Let me beseech you to reverence the sovereignty of God in the consequences of your ministry.

You know that whoever plants or waters, it is God that giveth the increase. The

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most faithful and able men in the church of Christ, are but ministers, by whom his people believe, even as the Lord giveth to every man. The hearts of men are not in our hands but in his ; and he only can open them to attend with reverence, faith and love, to the things of the gospel, reported by us.

This thought should humble us, and quicken us to pour out our hearts before the God of all grace, imploring his direction, assistance and benediction, on our labours, among the precious and immortal souls, to whose service we are devoted. Far be it from us to think that we can convert sinners, or build up saints by the force of our arguments, by the use of literature, by the charms of eloquence, and the striking beauties of language ! no, we should always go into the pulpit, and endeavour to live under a deep sense of this great truth, that we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, for it is the gift of God ; and that it is he who maketh one to differ from another ; that every good and perfect gift cometh down from the father of lights and mercies ; and that the weapons of our warfare (though very apt and fit) are mighty, not of themselves, or by our management of them, but through God's power, and by his spirit ; to the pulling down of the strong holds of sin
and

and Satan in the hearts of our beloved hearers, and the making them his willing people. Every one that is the seal of our ministry, is God's workmanship, his new creature.

(4.) Look (my brother) with a watchful eye to the purity of your aims and intentions in all your work: it is well known we have not in our way, (as dissenters) the tempting baits of worldly honours and emoluments; we must be very weak (as well as carnal) if we enter upon our function with any other prevailing views, but those of being instrumental to glorify God, and save souls; and I doubt not these are the views that have determined your acceptance of the call of this worshiping society, to minister to them in holy things.

Permit me, however, to say, it becomes you and all of us to maintain a godly jealousy over ourselves, at all times, that we be not led aside by selfish and unworthy motives, by an inordinate love to the praise of men, or fear of their displeasure, by the desire of temporal profits, or dread of temporal inconveniences and hardships: our great concern must be to have a single eye; and as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God, to speak in Christ, 2 Cor. i. 17. We are bound to seek not our own things but his; to preach him, and not ourselves; to live to him, and not to ourselves.

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Self must be deposed, that Christ alone may be exalted in, and by us.

(5.) Let me exhort, and humbly charge you, in the name of the Lord, to be very diligent in the several parts of your office.

You are sensible of the need of a close attention to those private studies that relate to your duty : blessed be God for the good portion of sacred knowledge which you have received ; this will, I trust, make you very desirous of improvement, that your profiting may appear unto all men.

We cannot reasonably hope for the furniture which our office requires, without serious application to various subjects of contemplation. If wisdom will meet us in the way of diligent search for her, she will well reward our pains ; but we must not imagine she will manifest herself to us, while we run from her in the paths of indolence and dissipation. A minister should consider his study, as a diligent tradesman does his shop or office ; from it he must not suffer himself to be much and long separated.

For this reason it is fit that he should be abstracted from secular employments, that he may give himself to reading, meditation and prayer. The scriptures must be the grand subject of his thoughts day and night ; for these are written by inspiration of God, and

and are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

As you (dear Sir) have had a liberal education, I need not tell you that a growing acquaintance with the original languages, with antient history, and the whole compass of solid learning, will be of great use to you in the study of the bible; but, above all, I think, you will find benefit by fixed meditation on the word of God; and humble fervent addresses to the throne of grace for that light that cometh from God.

We find diverse and strange doctrines spreading among professors in our day; and infidelity, at the same time, prevailing in the midst of us: the more pains, therefore, should ministers take; that, by God's grace, they may be able both to explain and defend that divine revelation, which is our only sure guide to heaven, and the only authoritative rule of faith, worship and practice as Christians.

I proceed now to speak (dear brother) of your public ministrations. Prepare for them in secret; not only by meditation, but by earnest supplication for God's presence, assistance, and blessing in your services. Preach the gospel plainly and fully, with ardent love to Christ, and his people, and tender compassion to perishing sinners: endeavour to convince them, by the law of
God

God, of their many transgressions in heart and life, and of their original guilt and depravity, impotence and misery : endeavour to lead them to Christ for salvation, by spreading abroad the favour of his name, his divine person, his full and perfect atonement for sin, his everlasting righteousness, as the surety and representative of his church, his resurrection and glory, the riches and suitableness of his benefits, the nature and terms of the new covenant, &c.

Discourse much on regeneration, faith and repentance, justification by the blood of Christ, adoption, and the sanctifying work of the spirit of God, the great and various duties of the Christian life, the eternal happiness of heaven, and the eternal punishment that will be inflicted on all them that know not God, and have not obeyed the gospel of his son.

But when ye would perswade men by the terrors of the Lord, forget not his mercies, nor the man that is the hiding-place from the storm ; direct them to him ; speak in the bowels of Christ, and remember your master's example, who shed tears over *Jerusalem*, when he pronounced her doom.

Take particular care in the application of your sermons to the consciences of your hearers ; and adapt your address agreeably

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to

to the different states of the unconverted, and the converted, the weak and strong.

As to the composition, style, method and manner of delivering your discourses, I shall not take upon me to say much ; it is best, I humbly conceive for a preacher, neither to neglect these things, nor to be very curious about them ; follow nature, under the guidance of grace, and you will learn to accommodate your words to the variety of your subjects, and know how to mingle the sublime and the familiar, the argumentative and pathetick, the awful and the alluring forms of address ; but I beseech you (dear Sir) always to remember that your business is not to amuse people with fine florid orations ; which, for the most part, run off from the soul, as oil from a marble stone, without leaving an impression, but to amend their hearts and lives ; and therefore confine not yourself so much to rules of art, or pre-conceived thoughts, as to be afraid of making use of any proper freedom of mind, while you are engaged in preaching, a word, not before intended, may prove very seasonable and useful.

Another part of your publick service, is prayer : and give me leave to say, this is one of your most important duties.

As we find no liturgy in the new testament, nor in the first and purest ages of the Christian church, we Protestant dissenters
are

distinguished by our freedom in social prayer, and our disapprobation of a confinement to human forms: but that this branch of our Christian liberty, may be advantageous to our congregations, we who minister, should labour to grow in the gift and grace of prayer, that we may offer up suitable confessions, requests, and thanksgivings, and may plead properly for our dear people, according to their several characters and circumstances.

Oh how solemn, delightful, and profitable is prayer in the Holy Ghost! with regard to the administration of the two sacraments (dear Sir) I beseech you endeavor to answer the end of these ordinances, by explaining the nature and benefits of them; in the office of baptism make a clear distinction between the washing of water and the renewing of the spirit, and let parents know when they give up their little children to God in this solemnity, that they should not only take encouragement from it in prayer for them, but consider how much they are obliged thereby to educate them in a christian manner.

As to the Lord's supper, encourage all that are poor in spirit, and that hunger and thirst after righteousness, to come to it, that they may honour Christ, and be refreshed and strengthened by the views of his dying love, and quickened to

diligence in their duty; but lay it not open to all, as if it belonged to them that make no credible profession of christianity, but live in an open contrariety to it.

Let me in the next place exhort you to adorn and enforce your publick ministrations by a holy life.

Let your good works speak continually for your master, even to them that hear not your sermons.

And let your conversation with those who are or may be under your pastoral care, be such as becometh the gospel. An officious intermeddling with their temporal affairs, and little matters of contention in families avoid, for it may be hurtful to you and to religion.

A gloomy countenance, a dogmatical humour, a curious prying into the secrets of conscience, and an affected loquacity on religious subjects, at all times, and in all companies, are things disgustful; but let your communication be grave, serious, and edifying; watch for opportunities of pious discourse, that your lips may feed many.

Watch over the young, and labour to form Christ in them, that they may be a seed to serve him when their fathers shall sleep in the dust.

Sympathize with the afflicted, visit the widows and the fatherless, the sick and dying.

Take

Take special care of those who may be under spiritual awakenings and convictions, and endeavour to lead them to Christ and a sound conversion.

Young converts should likewise be special objects of your attention, they are Christ's lambs, and he carries them in his bosom; let your conduct to them be loving and gentle; look with pity on tempted christians, for your master had a fellow-feeling with them; address them with compassionate tenderness, and pray for their deliverance and victory.

Let back-sliding christians be remembered in your prayers, and seek their welfare and recovery with great concern.

Finally, let all your services be sweetened with charity; beware of a narrow party spirit; love all good ministers and good men, however they may differ from you in names, lesser opinions and modes of worship; your zeal for the purity of the christian faith and practice will be most amiable and useful, when attended with humility candour, and benevolence to all the sincere disciples of our one Lord and Saviour.

Dear Brother, I have represented your duty in many particulars, not because you are ignorant of it, but to stir up your mind and my own by way of remembrance.

Your

Your work is great and difficult, for your encouragement in it consider (6) the promises of Christ relative to it.

There are two grand promises given for the support of all christians, and particularly faithful ministers in all ages, the one is *Matt. xviii. 18. On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

The other is *Matt. xxviii, 20, Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

It is a refreshing consideration to all that love Christ, and especially to his faithful ministers, that his gospel shall abide, and bring forth fruit to the final period of time; that he will have a church of real believers to the end of the world, and will defend it against all enemies visible and invisible. And has he said he will ever be with his servants in his work? what could he say more? in this one promise he has given them ground to hope for all that they want, his guidance, assistance, protection, provision, and consolation; live upon this good word of his grace (my dear brother) he will be with you if your heart be right with him (as I believe it is) and if he be with you, what shall harm you? what good shall be withheld from you?

He will take care of you, hold you, as one of the stars in his right hand, (such honour

honour will he put upon you, though in your own eyes you must be nothing) and he will perform all things for you; you serve a bountiful master, and if the riches of this world should not be poured in upon you (which indeed you must not seek with inordinate affection) he will grant you higher and better blessings, and make afflictions themselves to work together for good to you; and in the end bestow upon you that crown of righteousness and glory that shall not fade away.

We are the successors of excellent ministers, who bore the heat and burden of the day; one man sows and another reaps, they laboured, and we are come into the field so painfully and well cultivated by them; God was with them, and as their sufferings for Christ abounded, so did their consolations by him abound; our discouragements are different from theirs, and arise from the growth of infidelity and impiety, from the pride, luxury, and indolence of these prosperous times; but the grace which armed our fathers against a frowning world, can preserve us from the evil of the age wherein we live, and make us faithful unto death.

I shall conclude (7) with reminding you (dear Sir) of your solemn obligations to fidelity, diligence and perseverance in the service of Christ; consider the supreme authority

thority of your lord and master, his perfect knowledge of your heart and ways, and the account you must give to him.

Think what an honour it is to serve him, and especially in the capacity of a steward in his house; and let the dignity of your office move you to unwearied activity in the discharge of it.

He that is greatest in Christ's church must be the servant of all, and shew his superiority, not by affecting a lordship over God's heritage, but by excelling in knowledge, humility, love, meekness, temperance, self-denial, and patience. We may without pride magnify our office, as *Paul* did, when he said, *To me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

It is a good work to publish the glad tidings of salvation, and do the office of a gospel minister; but the higher our calling is, the more careful should we be to walk worthy of it, and to avoid every thing that would bring a reproach upon it: the eyes of all are upon us, some wait for our halting, that from our falls they may take occasion to vilify our profession, and the gospel itself; but let us watch in all things, and give ourselves to prayer, that we may shine as lights in the world.

Consider.

Consider likewise (dear Sir) the worth of human souls, created at first in the image of God, fallen from him, from original righteousness, strength, and happiness, into a state of sin and misery, but redeemed by the blood of his son, and every one of them of more value than a whole world of material and irrational beings.

Watch for souls, pray, preach, and live with a view to your being an instrument of their salvation! your office is one of the fruits of Christ's love to souls, who when he ascended up on high gave gifts to men, gave not only apostles, prophets, and evangelists, but pastors and teachers for the edification of his body; apply to this work in his name and strength with all your heart:

Remember the vows and engagements into which you have entered this day before many witnesses, before God, angels, and men, and remember the shortness and uncertainty of human life, that you may work while it is day, the night cometh in which no man can work, time vanishes away, behold the judge is at the door.

This is your day of coming into the pastoral office, the day of account is not far off, for what is our life but a vapour?

We who have been long in our work, have seen many of our fathers and brethren called off the stage before us, and we are waiting for our dismissal; we look on you,

E

(Brother)

(Brother) with great respect and pleasure
as on a young soldier enlisted in the service
of our master, to his all-sufficient grace we
commit and commend you; we wish you
length of days, much prosperity in your
soul and body, and in this church; and
our prayer to God for you and this flock
of Christ is, that you may have all comfort
in your mutual relation here, and a happy
meeting and eternal union in the kingdom
of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to
whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost
be all glory and honour for ever. Amen.



F I N I S

(Brother)

